



Our approach

Women in High Performance Coaching

Our approach

The work that we have undertaken in developing this WiHPC Action Plan has been driven by a complexity-based approach. Working in this way gives priority to the lived experience of those who are most impacted by the current system, particularly (but not exclusively) the women in the High Performance coaching environment.

Our initial work focused on gathering the narratives from these coaches and providing safe spaces where the coaches could work together to make sense of their individual and collective experience. We also used the SenseMaker survey process to reach a wider group of coaches.

Through these processes we identified the constraints and challenges in the current system, as well as some of the archetypal characters who seem to turn up in almost every sporting environment. As we worked with groups of coaches, we also supported networks and connections which continue to provide benefit to the nearly three hundred coaches who have been involved.



Our approach

We also believe that there comes a time in any system change process where those who are working at the grassroots need the active support of leaders in the system. In publishing this report, we are hoping to garner that high level support so that the great work of the courageous work of coaches and their allies can be allowed to flourish.

Acknowledging the complexity of a system also means acknowledging that the entire system can't be changed overnight. Effective long term change happens through lots of small initiatives, a step at a time. Consistent with this approach, we have chosen to focus on a few specific areas in this initial piece of work (and where practical to provide practical tools that sporting organisations can use to drive change).



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The Ecological Systems Model



The ecological systems model, (defined by LaVoi et al.) provides a valuable framework for contextualising the experiences of women coaches, revealing how personal, organisational, systemic, and socio-cultural factors collectively influence the experiences of women coaches.

Its complexity allows for the identification of opportunities for strategic actions or "nudges" that span all layers of the system.

The Ecological Systems Model



Socio-cultural influences

Cultural gender stereotypes, biases and norms (such as women being better with children and men being leaders).

Organisational context and structure

Organisational policies, practices, role requirements, use of space and opportunities. Includes travel, recruitment, parental leave and professional development.

Interpersonal and relational interactions

Social relationships including at home and work (such as colleagues, friends, parents, partners and children).

Individual biological and psychological factors

Personal and psychological factors such as expertise, cognitive emotion, values and personality.

The Ecological Systems Model



Socio-cultural influences

Cultural issues inhibit progress

- Debunk coaching myths through narratives and media messaging
- Leadership diversity and engagement will impact on levers
- Respectful behaviours fully integrated into environments (boardroom to daily training)
- Archetype toolkit, Intergenerational change, Working with the Boys Club
- Promote and highlight bright spots and organisational leaders (challenging the status quo)

Organisational context and structure

System issues are at the heart of challenges

- Development of an organisational road map to create an integrated plan for change
- Effective impact of toolkits: Recruitment, Parental leave, Part time roles, Job share, Allyship, Returnship, Mentorship, CPRN access, Reengagement
- Data and evidence of experiences and 'pipeline' narrowing
- Capability Framework developed and implemented, transferability of skills, succession planning and talent identification
- Legal obligations training
- Sustainable database with reporting mechanisms in place

Interpersonal and relational interactions

Deepen understanding the career journey for women

- Building alumni networks – including allyship, sponsorship, mentorship, corporate connections, target existing opportunities and create new ones
- Ignite and support local networks; coach, coach development, leadership, other

Individual biological and psychological factors

Role Models, Individual support and upskilling

- Talent development programs: Coaching, Leadership, Experiential learning program, New head coach cohort, coach development facilitators'
- Individual coach development programs and ongoing learning support
- Capability framework, CPRN access, mentorship
- Networks to build allyship and sponsorship – esp. in the detours and transferability of skills
- Reverse mentoring, archetypes toolkit, leadership training
- At all levels of the pipeline (entry, pathway, detour, transition to HP, transition to head coach)